

Coors Corridor Plan Update

Report on Design Workshop December 9, 2005



1. PROCESS

The first meeting on the Coors Corridor Plan Update identified goals and desired character for Coors. The second charrette workshop consisted of a collaborative hands-on design session among residents, representatives of neighborhood associations, and a planning team including HDR planning consultants and the City Planning Department. The planning team made presentations on design character and strategies for view preservation, site design, landscape enhancements, and pedestrian orientation. Participants applied these strategies to the Coors corridor, drawing on large aerial maps to identify *where* and *how* to achieve the goals outlined in the first meeting.

2. CHARACTER

Limited-access roadway

As the only North-South connector on the West Side between the escarpment and the Rio Grande, Coors will remain a major, high-volume arterial street. Whereas 20 years ago Coors serviced mostly local traffic, it now carries ever-increasing amounts of through traffic from the growing northwest population centers across the Rio Grande to employment and services east of the river. The type of land use and development adjacent to Coors must “facilitate the flow of traffic.”

Results of the second workshop were consistent with the first. Those who attended wanted to see Coors evolve into a “landscaped parkway” consistent with its designation as a limited-access roadway. Making Coors a limited-access roadway impacts conditions and choices for development along the corridor.

Character areas

Car Culture - Coors developed as an oversized, car-oriented landscape reflecting suburban environments of the past thirty years. Typical patterns include strip commercial centers, stand-alone buildings, segregated land uses, and single-family subdivisions that require driving long distances from home to work to shopping. This type of development is the trend along Coors and will likely continue unless other types of character are encouraged.

Open Space Oriented. Low density residential areas help to preserve a sense of open space and views; this type of development is found primarily between Coors and the river bosque, below the Corrales drain, around Piedras Marcadas, La Luz, Andalucia, and the area adjacent to Oxbow at the



end of Namaste. These areas should be preserved and protected from noise and other impacts of high-traffic volumes.

Walkable Compact. More recently, compact mixed-use commercial villages with a more walkable scale emerged separate from Coors. Riverside Plaza at Coors and Montañño is viewed as an attractive example, with its sense of enclosure, double-loaded shopping streets, outdoor seating, fountains and landscaping. People want more of those kinds of places. One comment was to “make everything like Riverside Plaza.”

A car-oriented land use pattern will increase traffic congestion and result in a homogeneous car-oriented strip that most people dislike. Workshop discussions focused on how to re-orient Coors as a place for people. Walkable compact areas should be encouraged. A network of trails can reinforce low density open areas and encourage walking and bicycling. As Coors develops, these three character areas should be differentiated and co-exist as places with very distinctive, memorable attributes.





Views

The Westside is characterized by dramatic views to the bosque, river, and Sandias. Especially in Zone 3, views to the bosque are critical. The existing 4-foot view plane in the current Coors Corridor Plan aims at views from automobiles traveling along Coors. Given the changing nature of Coors from local destination to a major carrier of through traffic, discussion focused on how to orient views not only from cars but from pedestrian places and trails, how and where to create view overlooks and identify essential view corridors.

3. STRATEGIES

Develop Coors as a landscaped parkway

Landscape enhancements should preserve a sense of the special qualities of the West Side with its unique views of the edge of the river, bosque, and mountains

-  Create a Parkway with the feel and look of the bosque
-  Use landscaped buffer close to the street to hide parking
-  Use trees to provide comfortable, shaded walking environments
-  Preserve the visual connection to the bosque in the foreground and mountains in the background through landscape treatments along Coors; bring the bosque plant palette up to Coors and create microclimate symbolic connections to the bosque and river

Buildings should be set back from the roadway, buffered with landscaping

The existing design guidelines encourage buildings to front on the street. Guidelines requiring excavation have not been applied consistently and as a result, pad sites on the street often block views and discourage pedestrian orientation. Participants want to avoid a “canyon effect” and do not want to see the back sides of buildings facing the street. Commercial development should not define the street. “Coors is not a pedestrian environment.”



Character of buildings and massing

- ✚ Place building massing and heights away from the roadway; no parapet intrusions along the street
- ✚ Prevent more entrances on Coors
- ✚ Break up parking lots through terracing
- ✚ Work with the topography – buildings step down with the contours, slope down the terrain to maintain the view line
- ✚ Place parking lots higher than buildings
- ✚ Require flat roof architectural styles

Create walkable village commercial areas off the roadway

Following the example of Riverside Plaza, areas along Coors should be re-scaled and re-oriented to create places with a more intimate walkable scale. Retail should be clustered rather than developed in a continuous strip to encourage walkability and preserve open space and views. One participant said “apply the La Luz concept to commercial areas.”

Characteristics.

- ✚ Sense of safety and feeling of enclosure for outdoor spaces
- ✚ Village (human scale) versus Big Box
- ✚ Architectural style - Territorial or village look that blends with the landscape
- ✚ Height restrictions, natural color, signage
- ✚ Central plaza feel
- ✚ Double-sided for shopping streets
- ✚ Breaks in building forms to create view windows
- ✚ Parking hidden with landscaping
- ✚ No drive-throughs

Future opportunities for walkable compact centers to consider:

- ✚ La Orilla – tie together multiple owners
- ✚ Southeast corner of Coors and Montañño – new retail and apartments
- ✚ Plaza at Paseo – could be made more walkable, connections to adjacent residential
- ✚ Southeast corner of Coors and Paseo – (SIPI has 2000 students)
- ✚ South of Alameda, west of Old Coors

Develop a comprehensive walkway system “off roadway” separate from auto traffic

Given its role as a major traffic carrier, participants thought that Coors itself would never be a comfortable pedestrian environment. Instead they recommended wide, off-road walkways buffered from the road with landscaping.

Important landscaped walkway connections:

- ✚ From residential areas to and from shopping and to and from bus stops along Coors
- ✚ Through the community to connect separate developments (not along Coors)



- ✚ From bus stops to shopping destinations
- ✚ To and from Cottonwood Mall

Develop a system of recreational trails along arroyos connecting to open spaces

East-West linear trail system can connect the two major open space elements paralleling the Coors Corridor: the river bosque and the Petroglyph National Monument escarpment and volcanoes. Within the corridor, the bosque is the main destination for pedestrians.

Important Trail System connections

- ✚ San Antonio Arroyo – trail on berm ridge connecting to La Mariposa Recreation Trail, Mariposa Basin, and Petroglyphs
- ✚ Off-road trails along Eagle Ranch – bicycle connections to Alameda, shopping
- ✚ La Orilla complete the off-road trail, connect to bosque
- ✚ Calabacillas Arroyo trail– access east side of river
- ✚ Alameda – pedestrian connection to Corrales bosque

Improve pedestrian crossings to enhance pedestrian travel and safety:

Participants suggested use of signalized intersections away from the corners with intersecting streets. Both underpasses and overpasses were suggested as safer ways for pedestrians to cross Coors. La Orilla was mentioned as a good underpass design.

Intersections for pedestrian improvement:

- ✚ Dellyne and Coors – improve for pedestrian safety (curve hides pedestrians)
- ✚ Montano across Coors (underpass)
- ✚ Across Montañito at Winter Haven (east of Montano Plaza) – connect with Pueblo Montañito trailhead and Paseo del Bosque trail east of River
- ✚ Montañito Plaza, Irving
- ✚ Calabacillas Arroyo
- ✚ Paseo east of Coors – North-South pedestrian crossings to connect with Piedras Mercadas

Encourage use of various types of public transit and improve pedestrian orientation of transit stops

- ✚ Locate bus stops to take advantage of view points, provide walking access to commercial areas, and that are near cross streets
- ✚ Provide more comfortable transit shelters that are covered and landscaped
- ✚ Consider running trolleys or shuttles along Coors to connect places

Develop view overlooks at strategic locations

- ✚ Place mountains, river and bosque in the same frame; preserve views to line of trees
- ✚ Identify view origins at key high points and from the edge of the corridor



Potential framed view opportunities

- ✚ Southeast and northeast corners of Learning Rd. and Coors have excellent views, slope with 35 ft drop (retirement center?)
- ✚ Namaste overlooking Bosque
- ✚ City park south of Montano, west of Coors – amphitheater opportunity
- ✚ View corridor at SIPI

Require new developments to frame view planes through placement of buildings and creation of internal view corridors

- ✚ Create breaks in the built form to create *view windows*

Examples are:

- ✚ Corner of La Orilla east of Coors - Bosque Plaza, near Hoffmantown Baptist Church
- ✚ Along west side of Coors at key intersections

Identify and preserve *view corridors* from major E-W streets and drainage channels

Streets that feed into Coors from the west offer dramatic panoramic views to east-bound pedestrians and drivers as they come down the hill. These views have historical reference to the natural drainageways which forged passageways down the west mesa through the escarpment. Views encompass the entire landscape of bosque, river, and mountains. These view corridors should be respected and strengthened through regulations that keep buildings from blocking the views and by creating windows in the urban form

Important E-W corridors:

- ✚ Western Trail, Montano, La Orilla, Paseo
- ✚ San Antonio and Calabacillas arroyos

